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## **TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO**

Study on the effectiveness of a bilingual  
teaching program: The learning of double  
negatives by L1 Spanish-L2 English students

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## **ABSTRACT**

The acquisition of a second language, being English the most representative example of this phenomenon, has become something essential for a person to be immersed in the society of this day and age. Multiple investigations have proved bilingual education to be crucially beneficial for personal, educational, and social development for those students participating on it. Discerning the real effectiveness of one of these programs was the main reason why we resolved to choose two groups of students enrolled in a bilingual learning program and a traditional English as a second language learning program respectively and carry out this study. The results were genuinely revealing as they appear to demonstrate that there is some aspects that seem to need a revision for these bilingual programs to be truly effective.

**Keywords:** CLIL - Double negation - Linguistic performance - Second Language Acquisition - TESOL

La adquisición de segundas lenguas, siendo el inglés el ejemplo más extendido de este fenómeno, se ha convertido en algo esencial para que una persona pueda participar en la sociedad actual. Numerosos estudios han demostrado que los programas bilingües son realmente beneficiosos para el desarrollo personal, educativo y social de aquellos estudiantes que de ellos forman parte. Conocer la efectividad real de uno de estos programas fue el principal motivo por el cual nos decidimos a escoger dos grupos de estudiantes que siguen un programa bilingüe y uno tradicional de aprendizaje de inglés como segunda lengua respectivamente y llevar a cabo este estudio. Los resultados fueron ciertamente reveladores pues parecen demostrar que la existencia de ciertos aspectos que necesitan ser revisados para que estos programas sean verdaderamente efectivos.

**Palabras clave:** CLIL - Doble negación - Rendimiento lingüístico - Adquisición de segunda lengua - Enseñanza de inglés a hablantes de otras lenguas



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The first contact most of the people in my generation experienced with second language learning occurred in the mid-nineties when we started studying English at primary school. The teacher used to stand in front of the students reading the textbook out loud and commenting grammar rules. We would reinforce the knowledge acquired and demonstrate how much we have learned fulfilling exercises in the book or writing short essays that we would afterwards read in front of the class; this was the only interaction present in the course. This method, later in this paper referred to as traditional L2 learning system, has kept on existing all throughout our academic experience and it is still there.

Something changed for some of us when we enrolled in the Languages School at the age of sixteen and started, at the same time, receiving feedback concerning the bilingual programs which were being introduced in several educative centers in my city, Palencia. In my case, that was a crucial moment for what I understood as foreign language acquisition, something that was being born at that time and that I wanted to be part of.

The increase of international relations as a consequence of educative, labor, cultural, and, of course, tourist exchanges, together with the presence of new technologies and possibilities in everyday life, has turned languages into an essential condition if a person truly desires to be immersed in the society of this day and age. Proficiency in foreign languages carries together the opportunity of getting closer to new cultures and customs, encouraging at the same time interpersonal relationships. This is one of the reasons for bilingual education not to be limited to the acquisition of two languages but to be considered the mean of teaching and learning about several areas of knowledge.

Multiple investigations have proved bilingual education to be crucially beneficial for personal, educational, and social development for those students participating on it. Discerning the real effectiveness of one of these programs was the main reason why we resolved to choose two groups of students enrolled in the High School Jorge Manrique (Palencia) and carry out this investigation.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section is divided into the following three areas: 1) a general overview on the acquisition of second languages with a remark to simple and double negatives as these structures will be the focus of this study; 2) a grammatical approach to the use of negation in English and Spanish and a comment on previous literature about the acquisition of this grammatical feature in both monolingual and bilingual education; and 3) a more practical approximation to our subject of study, the way TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) has been introduced into the Spanish educative system and the relation of a specific bilingual program with the results obtained in our study.

The combination of these three areas of study - second language acquisition, English/Spanish grammar, and bilingual education - defines the body of this investigation, which revolves around the learning of two types of negation exemplified in (1) and (2).

(1) *The student didn't pass the exam.*

(2) *We didn't see anything.*

In this work, the type in (1) will be referred to as “simple negation”, that is, “a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence’s meaning” (Crystal, 1991, 231); and the type in (2) will be referred to as “double negative”, which implies the use of two negative words to express a simple negative idea (Oxford University Press, 2014).

### 2.1 Second Language Acquisition

In order to evaluate the way a given second language acquisition procedure functions, it is necessary to stem from a theoretical approach that can account for the mechanisms underlying this process. Hence, as part of our theoretical base, we will take into consideration Van Patten and Williams’ work (2007: 7), in which these scholars assert that “any theory about second language acquisition needs to make clear what it means by language.” Taking this into account, if we limit ourselves to the very



definition of the term “language” as “a system of communication consisting of sounds, words, and grammar, or the system of communication used by people in a particular country or type of work” (Cambridge University Press, 2014), we are missing an important portion of what is implied by the idea of second language acquisition, that is, the importance of the environment where language is acquired, and so in this work it is also taken into deep consideration the context in which that acquisition does occur.

For the sake of using clear terminology, we will accept that a *first language*, also referred to as *native language* or *L1*, is “the language that a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where the child lives” (Nordquist, 2014) and that *second language*, also known as *L2*, is “the language learned by a person after his or her native language, especially as a resident of an area where it is of general use” (Dictionary.com Unabridged, 2014). At the same time, although conscious about the differences between the process of acquiring an L1 and that of learning an L2, we will refer interchangeably to *Second Language Acquisition* (SLA) or *Sequential Learning Acquisition* (SLA) as “the process of learning a second language after a first language is already established” (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2014).

Apart from the theoretical implications of the latter concept (acquiring *versus* learning process distinction), we consider essential the inclusion of a social aspect in the SLA process. It was in the 1920s when a group of psychologists led by B. F. Skinner<sup>1</sup> proposed the idea of the *Behavioristic Approach* defending that, when applied to the acquisition of languages, the environment decidedly marks the development of this apprehension (Buitrago, 2014). In the same line, in bilingual training programs like the one being discussed in this research, an Anglophone atmosphere is recreated through the inclusion of not only an English as a second language subject but also other courses such as science, history, or geography which are taught in English. This kind of education corresponds with the one proposed by the so-called CLIL method (Tennant, 2013), which stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. Consequently, CLIL results in the simultaneous learning of content and English language and so, the creation of an “English atmosphere” that reinforces the acquisition of knowledge,

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<sup>1</sup> B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) graduated in psychology and joined, in 1948, the Psychology Department at Harvard University where he became the leader of the Behaviorism approach and contributed to the development of experimental psychology (Boeree, 2006).

appears to be mandatory and, at the same time, the natural outcome of this kind of training methods. In fact, as stated by different scholars (e.g. Marsh, 2009 or Abroads, 2013, among others), when trying to learn English, in addition to linguistic features such as vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammar, it is required to get closer to the culture and daily life surrounding the language so as to be able to understand the way of thinking that appears with it.

Once some basic concepts concerning our theoretical background have been delimited, we can now establish some similarities and differences among them in order to understand how the acquisition and learning of L1 and L2 do take place.

We take for granted that both L1 and L2 acquisition processes do share a similar sequential pattern, which signifies that the two of them are developed in consecutive stages (Ipek, 2009). In this sense, Ellis (1984) states the existence of three phases<sup>2</sup> within the acquisition of a language, it is the third of these the level in which we hypothesize the subjects of our study are located considering the skills and aptitudes they are supposed to prove as a result of the input received.

Despite the numerous resemblances between acquisition and learning proceedings, the vast majority of scholars agree on the fact that they are, ultimately, different, as Towell & Hawkins (1994: 14) affirm: “very few L2 learners appear to be fully successful in the way that native speakers are” and so, a native-like proficiency is hardly ever achieved by SLA (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

Although the main differences between L1 acquisition and L2 learning are found within the field of biology and psychology and are related to the *Critical Period Theory*<sup>3</sup>, there are some differences concerning the social and educational context that will present a more important influence in the outcome of our paper and these are, for instance, the social and academic background of the student or the environment in which the education does take place.

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<sup>2</sup> The three phases which are affirmed by Rod Ellis to be noticeable before the full acquisition of a language is achieved are: 1) *The Silent Period*, 2) *The Formulaic Speech*, and 3), the one which seems to be more clarifying and relevant for our study, that of *Structural and Semantic Simplifications*: during this last stage, the user of the language tends to omit grammatical functors such as articles and auxiliary verbs (structural simplification) and/or content words such as nouns or verbs (semantic simplification). These omissions may be due to the ineptitude of the speaker to achieve a concrete level of linguistic competence.

<sup>3</sup> The Critical Period Hypothesis states that there is a period of growth in which full native competence is possible when acquiring a language. This period covers from early childhood to adolescence, the age in which the participants of our study are (British Council, 2014).

It has been earlier mentioned that both L1 and L2 acknowledgement processes do share a sequential pattern and so, in the same way we assume this as the fact that would explain the way L1 and L2 acknowledgement processes do occur, numerous scholars such as Brown (1973) or Lightbown and Spada (2006) ratify an idea which was labeled by Krashen (1982) as *Natural Order Hypothesis*. This theory suggests that the acquisition of certain grammatical functions or morphemes do happen, regularly, in the same order. It is necessary to set clear that it is regularly, and not always, when this happens. In addition to this, some scholars (Wells, 1986 or McLaughlin, 1987) claim that some other morphemes studied do not follow the expected order but their acquisition seems to be influenced by external factor such as sex, social background, rate of learning, or native language influences.

In order to observe if the acquisition of a specific grammatical structure such as negation follows a certain order in the SLA process in L1Spanish-L2 English speakers, we must deal with the way negation functions in Spanish and in English, and also with the main characteristics of this feature in both grammars.

## **2.2. Grammatical characteristics of double negatives in Spanish and in English**

In Spanish (RAE, 2009), negative sentences are used, among other possibilities, to express the falseness of a given state or the inexistence of a mentioned action, process, or property (e.g. *Mañana no voy al trabajo*; *Ella no dijo nada*); to request something to be stopped (e.g. *No hables tanto*); or to direct a question onto a certain answer (e.g. *¿No son ya las dos?*).

Negative words may belong, in Spanish, to different word classes. Nevertheless, the most common one is the adverb *no*. Some other examples of negative adverbs such as *nunca*, *jamás*, *tampoco*, or *nada* can be found within the same group and these stand for different interpretations and so they may appear in sentences of frequency (e.g. *No voy nada al cine*); intensity (e.g. *El autor no profundiza nada en la psicología del personaje*); value or price (e.g. *No cuesta nada*); etc. There are some other contexts where *nada* is analyzed as a degree adverb as in the cases of, for instance, *nada fácil* or *nada lejos*.

In Spanish, double negatives are a grammatically correct structure as the use of two negative elements is accepted (e.g. *no quiero nada*), even redundant since the two

of them are discussed as a complex negative one (e.g. *No hay nostalgia peor que añorar lo que nunca jamás sucedió* (Joaquín Sabina, 1990). The concurrence of several indefinites within the same sentence may be paraphrased into a simple negative (e.g. *quiero algo*) and hence, focusing for instance on the previous example, either *nunca* or *jamás* could be omitted and the meaning would remain identical.

In the case of double negatives, when a negative indefinite pronoun (e.g. *nada*, *nadie*, *ninguno*, etc.) appears in post verbal position, it requires a negative element in the preverbal position. It is, hence, accepted *No vino nadie* or *No fue a ningún sitio* but not others such as *\*Vino nadie* or *\*Fue a ningún sitio* which are, on the other hand, accepted in English (e.g. *She/he went nowhere*). The expressions that demand a negative element in one of the mentioned contexts are referred to as *términos de polaridad negativa* (RAE, 2009).

There is one more phenomenon concerning double negatives in Spanish: the so-called *alternancia negativa* (RAE, 2009). This term is used to depict the existence of couples such as *No vino nadie*  $\approx$  *Nadie vino*. In the first case, it must appear a negative word – a negative indefinite pronoun in the example proposed – in post verbal position and always under the influence of the negative adverb *no*. In the second case, the negative word precedes the verb and it is incompatible with the adverb *no* in modern language (*\*Nadie no vino*). The importance of this phenomenon – the possibility of having one (*Nadie vino*) or two (*No vino nadie*) negative elements<sup>4</sup> in synonymous sentences - proves that Spanish is one of those languages that own a unique group of negative words either in post (after a verb in the negative) or preverbal position. In opposition to these, we encounter languages like English or German which present a second group of voices such as *nothing*, *nobody*, *no one*, *none*, etc. that lack this double-position possibility (e.g. *anybody/nobody can come* but *\*cannot come anybody/nobody*); In the case of English, as it happens in Spanish, a negative statement is used to express opposition to an affirmative one, or to set that another statement is not true (Soanes, 2012).

There exist three main ways to construct negation in English: 1. Adding the negative adverb *not* or the contraction to a verb (e.g. *She is tired-She is not/isn't tired*); 2. Using negative words such as *nothing*, *never*, *nobody*, *nowhere*, *neither*, etc. with

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<sup>4</sup> More than two negative elements can be found in certain structures in Spanish such as *No vino nunca nadie* or *No fue nunca a ningún sitio*.

verbs in the affirmative form (e.g. *We have never been to Germany*); and 3. Adding a negative prefix (e.g. *dis-*, *un-*, *non-*, *-in*) to the start of an affirmative word (e.g. *common-uncommon*). Concerning the first of these possibilities to negate in English, there is a series of adverbs such as *hardly*, *barely*, *scarcely*, *seldom* and *rarely* which, although not as recurrent as *no* and usually described as positive ones, may have a negative meaning and so, according to the general rule, should not appear together with another negative element within the same sentence, e.g. *\*He couldn't hardly catch his breath*.

Focusing on the sentential level, there are a few special cases that deserve to be remarked when explaining how negative sentences are formed in English:

- Negative statements with *be*, *have* and modals: the negative is produced by placing *not* after the auxiliary. It is always placed after the first auxiliary if there are a number of them (e.g. *He could not have been expelled*).
- Negative statements with “do”, “does”, and “did”: the negative form of this auxiliary verb goes always after the subject and before the lexical verb which appears in the form of a bare infinitive (e.g. *He does not work well*).
- Negatives with “no” and “not any” (equivalent to *no* and *none*): the two kinds of negatives have the same meaning, although *no* is generally more emphatic than *not...any*. They form the negative construction as in *I've got no time-I've seen no one* or *I haven't got any time-I haven't seen any one*.

It is mainly this last case and the difference in meaning between *no* – negative adverb equivalent to *not* (Hornby, 1989) – and *any* – used to replace *some* in negative or interrogative utterances (Mangold, 1958) – the one which appears to be more meaningful in the special case of double negatives, e.g. *I didn't get no apples-I didn't get any apples*; as these possibilities may be correct in modern English in the case of *didn't... any...* but not correct – although common in spoken American English – according to prescriptive grammars in the case of *didn't... no...* when *no* is used with a verb in the negative form, this is, when a double negative appears.

Focusing on the (un)acceptance of double negatives in English, it is important to remark that in Old English, as it still happens in many other languages such as Spanish,

Portuguese, or French, double negatives were accepted until the 17<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Shakespeare's "*I never was nor never will be*" (Shakespeare, 1592). It was in this period when several writers and grammarians, in their attempt to systematize the English language, stated that "*two Negatives in English destroy one another, or are equivalent to an Affirmative*" (Lowth, 1775, cited by Oxford English Dictionary) and so, "double negatives, when used to express a negative idea, aren't acceptable in standard English" (Soanes, 2012). While, as above mentioned, in Spanish double negatives are a common, accepted structure, in English, two negatives together are usually studied as a typical case of either Old English or non-standard style in which one is cancelling out the other. For instance, the sentence *\*I don't know nothing about computers* is understood as either *I don't know anything about computers* or as *I know nothing about computers*.

To close this section, it might be helpful to mention that both Spanish and English find a correspondence in some negative simple words such as "nobody" (*nadie*), "nothing" (*nada*), "never" (*nada*) but not in others such as "nowhere" or "no way". Besides, considering double negatives, the subject of our study, it seems clear that it is Spanish the language in which double negatives are wider preferred and recognized as a correct part of the language while in English, although generally accepted in the non-standard everyday use, some scholars (Labiak, 2014) remain reluctant to introduce this structure into the prescriptive style.

Taking into account this difference between both languages, and as part of the body of this work, we will present in the following section some observations about how negation is acquired by L1 Spanish-L2 English speakers.

### 2.2.1 THE ACQUISITION OF NEGATION BY L2 ENGLISH SPEAKERS

The acquisition of negation has been largely examined as it is, by definition, a crucial syntactic phenomenon in every language. Numerous publications have concluded that, for this particular feature, its development in L1 and L2 shows several aspects in common as we will discuss throughout this section (Meisel, 1997).

The first compelling research carried out covering this subject is that of Klima and Bellugi's (1966), who find out the existence of three stages in the development of English language users' ability to structure negation by studying three L1 English



monolingual speaking children. They concluded that, when acknowledging the ability to negate in English, the user of this language goes through the following three different stages: I) the production of a sentence external negative particle, e.g. *No singing songs*; II) the production of the negative element placed within the sentence and the possible appearance of *don't* and *can't*, e.g. *He not little, he big*; and, III) the full realization of the auxiliaries, which begin to appear in declarative and interrogatives and therefore they are no longer simply part of the negative element in the sentence, e.g. *No, it isn't*. It is this last stage, considering the input received by our students and the output they are expected to demonstrate, the one we use in order to frame the realization of our questionnaire.

The next study that needs to be remarked, in our attempt to depict the process by which negation is acquired and delimit what we may expect from the students that would later fulfill our questionnaire at the same time, is that of Butterworth's (1972), as it is the first one with a deciding significance in Spanish. This scholar concludes that there is a noticeable resemblance between Klima and Bellugi's stages I and II – e.g. *me no go, no understand* – and the production on negation made by the protagonist of his study (Eisouh, 2011), an adolescent named Ricardo, L1 Spanish speaker – L2 learner of English. Butterworth states that his research “may provide evidence that the universal mechanism for language acquisition remains available to adolescents when acquiring a second language” (Irvine, 2005: 39) and, consequently, the schemes followed by the speaker when acquiring the capacity to negate in the L2 do not depend on his/her native language.

Other work that deserves our attention is that of Lightbown and Spada's (1999), revisited by Ahmad (2002), who examines the acquisition of, among others, L1 Spanish speakers. The hypotheses presented in the work may act as a model for the ones we contemplate in our research. The outcome obtained by Ahmad establishes that there is a remarkable difference in the developmental phases of the acquisition of negation as a result of the higher or lower amount of input the student receives, what he names *beginner and higher level subjects*. Also, as it had been previously set in other studies such as the one by Lightbown & Spada's, Ahmad establishes as a premise for his work, when proving that “the acquisition of negation in these stages overlaps” and hence, mistakes related with one or more of these stages may be found in the output of a single

person. Besides he claims that “Spanish speakers tend to prolong the lower developmental stage” (Ahmad, 2002: 13) and so they tend to make primary mistakes even in more advanced stages.

We have been delineating in the previous paragraphs the ideas which have been proposed by other authors in the issue of the acquisition of negation. These scholars agree on the fact that this process goes through some stages which seem to depend on the level of proficiency of the speakers. This last circumstance is utterly linked with our hypotheses which, as it will be further explained later in this paper, deal with the assumption that a higher proficiency in English, as a result of a more extensive input received, will reflect a better performance on the negation in English. More specifically, we will analyze how Spanish speakers learn this type of grammatical constructions, taking into account how bilingual programs in Spanish schools work when teaching English. In this way, in the next section we will describe briefly one of those bilingual programs which will be used to frame the context of our study.

### **2.3. Pedagogical considerations on learning English by Spanish students**

It has been no more than a few decades ago, but especially in the recent years, when people have become aware of their averagely insufficient proficiency on foreign languages and how important it is to master at least one of them. In a global, information-driven society in which supranational organizations have a more influential presence than national governments and traditional borders appear to be old-fashioned, a common framework of references for languages is mandatory. Considering *Esperanto*<sup>5</sup> (1887) as a project which is not fully developed yet, it is, without any doubt, English the worldwide language we all have to deal with.

This internationalization above commented is the main reason for a radical change in education to be demanded. The situation in Spain is, to a certain extent, different to the average considering the powers have been split into 17 communities, which also affects the linguistic panorama. Out of the approximately 40 million dwellers registered in the country, 72’8% of them refers to Spanish, officially named *Castellano*, as their mother tongue (OLBI, 2014). Linguistic dissimilarities are present within the regions in which Spanish coexists with other languages (Catalan, Galician

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<sup>5</sup> Esperanto was intended to be a “second language” that would allow people who speak different native languages to communicate, yet at the same time retain their own languages and cultural identities.



and Basque) and this should, according to some scholars, help in the application of these innovations as the so-called *interlanguage*<sup>6</sup> is already present in the user.

It was in 1996 (Alan Dobson et. al., 1996) when the Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council acknowledged a compromise by which English language would gain presence in Spanish state schools. 43 schools and, approximately, 12,000 pupils (three to four years old) were integrated in the first phase of this plan.

From this moment on, following the exhortations promulgated by the Council of Europe (Cervantes, 2014), Spanish education specialists have worked on the promotion and enactment of laws that enhance the acknowledgment of foreign languages and the student's coexistence with them since the early stages of their primary education. One of these decrees, the Spanish Organic Act 2/2006 (JCyL, 2006), insists on the need of a school system which boosts foreign language learning.

Considering these governmental recommendations and recurrently referring to them as “immersion in the English language”, numerous schools and high-schools in the region carry out a bilingual training which is usually introduced when students start primary education at the age of three and is, progressively, instituted so as to be completed by the last year of the officially named ESO, or Secondary Compulsory School, when students are 16 years old. The first results of this collaboration were checked in 2006 by a group of scholars (Alan Dobson et. al., 1996) who confirmed the advantages of such an academic methodology.

Practically ten years have passed since bilingual divisions were officially institutionalized in Castile. Considering this, it seems adequate to revise this kind of programs in order to know their current efficacy, which will be part of the aims of the present work.

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<sup>6</sup> Interlanguage: when acquiring a second language, the learner may develop forms and, somehow, an actual language that is neither the L1 nor the L2. As a result of this, rules and structures valid in the native language can be misapplied in the target one although this may look correct in the language learner's mind. It is also, and in some way more important, the period within the acquisition in which the learner has not fully refined the input received as it keeps growing during the time he/she needs to process the information. (Bogglesworldsl, 2014)

#### 4. HYPOTHESES

The main area of study in our research is one of the basic constructions in the English language, as it is negation. Moreover, we will focus on double negatives as the usage of these is regarded as different when comparing English and Spanish, the languages our students coexist with. Being accepted and grammatically correct in Spanish but observed as incorrect in standard modern English, this situation leads us to suppose that our students may be taken to confusion by the influence of their L1 if the knowledge they have acquired of the L2 is not enough so as to make them aware of the distinct grammars they are dealing with.

In this way, the aim of our study is to analyze how L1 Spanish-L2 English students perceive double negatives in English and check if the fact that they are registered in a specific English-Spanish bilingual teaching program has any effect on their learning of English. At the same time, we intend to compare the performance of these students with that of other students coming from the same school but who follow a more traditional (non-bilingual) educational program.

Given the advantages of the bilingual program followed in the school of the first group of students, we expect that the first group of students will obtain a better performance on how to construct double negation in English than those following the traditional program.

More specifically, we expect to find that the acceptance of errors or ungrammatical utterances in English will be higher in those students who receive a lower input in English, this is, the ones within a traditional training. Considering this and keeping in mind what Lightbown and Spada (1999) state, we expect to find a correlation between the quantity of input received and the quantity of errors made or accepted as correct. When analyzing these errors, we expect that they will be presumably generated by the group with a lower input in English.

In short, and as a consequence of the amount of input, we think it will be observed that a higher input in English and a more surrounding “L2 atmosphere” - as the one developed in the bilingual program - will affect positively the acquisition of English as an L2, that is, they will reflect a less amount of mistakes in how the L1 Spanish students produce or perceive English double negations.

Finally, we will focus our attention on whether or not the application of these bilingual syllabuses is still efficient or, *au contraire*, they should be, in some way, updated to the new possibilities which are now open to both educators and students.

## 5. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The participants of our study are students of the Secondary School Jorge Manrique (Palencia, Spain). A voluntary program of bilingual Spanish-English education was introduced in this school during the academic year 2009/2010 as exhorted by the Order EDU/221/2009<sup>7</sup> (JCyL E., 2009). In this way, two groups of students that belong to two different training systems can be found in this school: (1) those registered in the double-language program above mentioned, whose members will be referred to as Group A hereafter, and (2) those registered in a “traditional” education program in which English appears just as a second language subject with no more subjects taught in this language and so, we will label these students as Group B from now on.

In this section, both training systems will be described and we will comment the different characteristics that define each of the groups as well as the procedure we carried out in order to obtain the data. The results obtained will be analyzed in section 7.

### 5.1 Participants

As introduced in the previous section, all the students being tested in our research belong to a High School located in Palencia and are currently taking the last year of secondary education, which is mandatory as established by Spanish education laws.

The vast majority of the students have been attending their lessons in this same institution for four years now, so the input received by the participants in each group is practically the same. As the degree of homogeneity between the level of English competence of these students may not be balanced, we will take the academic year they are in as a reference of their level in English. All the participants of this study have

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<sup>7</sup> Order EDU/221/2009 (JCyL E., 2009) states that the amount of hours given in English cannot be over 50% of the total, allowing centres to increase the teaching hours till 32 per week. Because of this, the program developed in each institution may vary and hence, the one we are working with will be described throughout this section.

taken ESL (English as a Second Language) lessons in the traditional way since they were five years old and, more specifically, the members of Group A, have been having bilingual instruction since their first year in the ESO, that is, for four years now.

Both of the groups are instructed as teacher-fronted classes so it is the lecturer the main source of the knowledge proposed by the curriculum project for both of the programs, always in conjunction with the textbooks<sup>8</sup>. As a result of this, for the two groups, the normal procedure followed in a regular ESL class consists, on the explanation of grammar rules followed by written exercises. Choral like repetition of a given feature and loud-voice answers to the tasks proposed appear to be the most recurrent output in which the student is able to show his/her proficiency apart from, of course, the examinations that will later determine their final grade.

Group A, those students taking part in the bilingual education system, combines being taught in Spanish in the majority of the courses with classes in English in four hours per week of the actual ESL course in addition to Social Sciences (3 hours per week), History and Geography; Natural Sciences (3h/w), and Ethics (1h/w). On the other hand, Group B's teaching is completely given in Spanish but for the four hours of ESL. Besides the courses in English, the members of the bilingual groups in this high school do have to attend two supplementary hours per week. During this time they practice extra grammar tasks in order to deal better with the other subjects, listening and reading comprehension, phonetics and conversation.

In order to obtain a more clear vision of this information, a tabulated summary is presented in table 1:

Table 1. Distribution of groups: Subjects taught in English

Courses Group	ESL	Social Sciences: History and Geography	Natural Sciences	Ethics	Supplementary hours
A					
B					

<sup>8</sup> Group A uses a book called *Frontrunner 3 (B1+)* (Falla, 2011) while Group B follows *Real English ESO 4* (Mark, 2010). Apart from the workbook that comes together with each of the textbooks, the students in Group A have access to an online platform named *Oxford Online Learning Zone* in which they have the chance to enlarge and reinforce their knowledge.

## 5.2 Procedure

In order to test the knowledge and command on ~~and~~ double negation by our two groups of participants and their response towards this phenomenon, we tested them using a short questionnaire<sup>9</sup> [see Appendix 1].

Trying not to interrupt the normal development of the lessons, the teachers agreed on us using one of the ESL hours for each group and hence, once the questionnaire was distributed, presented, and explained, the students had 50 minutes - the time their classes and examinations last - to fill it in. These exercises were designed to evaluate the quality of their linguistic performance in the specific grammatical feature of double negation in English, their L2, and to check whether it is affected or not by the different amount of input they are exposed to in English and/or by their linguistic competence in Spanish.

The questionnaire consisted on three tasks and the students in both groups were given the instructions to fulfill it as follows:

Task 1 is a multiple choice exercise in which the students are required to select, among the two options given, the one that they consider to be the most accurate for each question. With this exercise, we make the students choose among the negative and non-negative pronouns or verbs that are offered as a response to the questions proposed. Being the presence of a pronoun one of the most repeated examples of double negatives in Spanish, we consider it important to have it compared with an “equivalent” in English, e.g. *No, no quiero nada – No, I don’t want anything/nothing*. The negative particle *no* and a finite form of the verb appear in the answer of 6 out of 9 entries. The other three, questions number 2, 7, and 9, present a different structure which deals with verbal conjugation, recurrently repeated as grammatical work throughout SLA, and so it is the verb which needs to be inflected in the negative taking into account the context within the sentence, e.g. *Q-Do you have any money? A- No, I don’t have any/have none*.

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<sup>9</sup> Taking into account that the students being tested for this research were under eighteen by the time the questionnaire was fulfilled, we deemed as necessary to ask the Principal for permission for the students to participate and so, informed teachers and pupils of both groups and having the consent from the institution.

In task 2, the students are asked to paraphrase five sentences, e.g. *I didn't hardly notice you had had your cut*. These utterances, incorrect according to standard Modern English rules but possible depending on the context are intended to check the ability of these students to differentiate between Spanish, in which double negatives are accepted, and English grammars and their proficiency in English at the same time.

The last task is one of acceptability judgment in which the students are asked to grade, from 1 to 4, the examples of negative structures proposed in the different sets and different languages (English and Spanish) as they find them more or less correct, e.g. *No necesitamos educación alguna – We don't need no education*. The different numbers stand for 1 as very bad, 2 as bad, 3 as good, and 4 as very good. There is a series of entries – no. 1C, 2B, 4B, 4C, and 5C – whose structure, later in the next section labelled as *structure no.3*, will be analyzed into deeper detail in section 7.

We will put together, when working with the results, some of the sentences given to the students considering the internal structure of these. Out of this classification, we encounter the following five structures:

1. Negative form of the verb / negative indefinite in Spanish, e.g. *No necesitamos ninguna educación*.
2. Negative form of the verb / positive indefinite in Spanish, e.g. *No necesitamos educación alguna*.
3. Negative form of the verb / negative indefinite in English, e.g. *We don't need no education*.
4. Negative form of the verb / positive<sup>10</sup> indefinite in English, e.g. *I didn't know anything at all*.
5. Positive form of the verb / negative indefinite in English, e.g. *I know nothing about sports*.

Once this questionnaire was fulfilled by our students, it was corrected and the results tabulated. In the next section, the answers we have collected will be analyzed and discussed in order to obtain some conclusions that endorse, or not, our initial hypotheses.

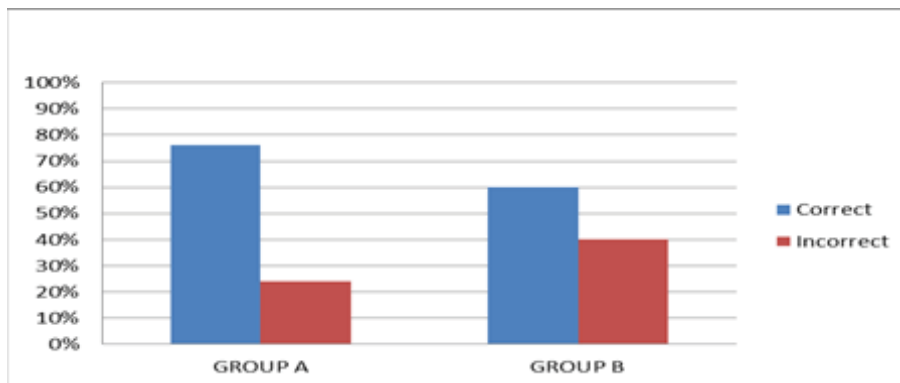
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<sup>10</sup> The indefinites *any/anything* are considered as positive ones in this paper in opposition to the use of the negative one *no*.

## 6. RESULTS

For task no. 1, in which the students were asked to choose one of the two options provided, the answers are presented in graph 1, where we can observe that, apparently, a worst performance was demonstrated by the members of Group B.

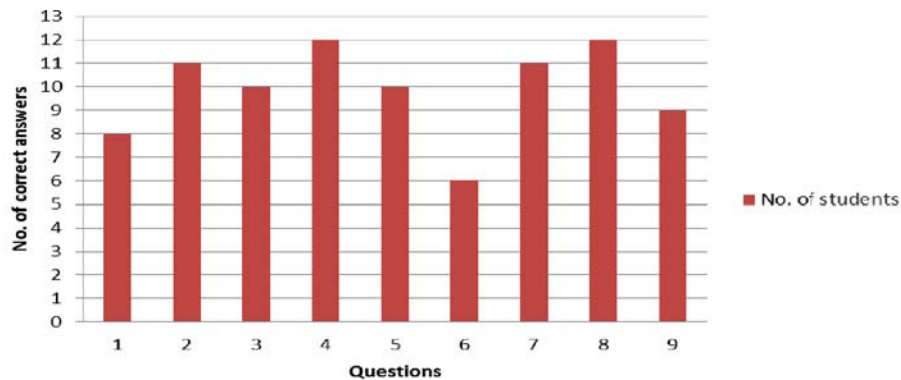
Graph 1. Collection of answers given to task 1 by Groups A and B



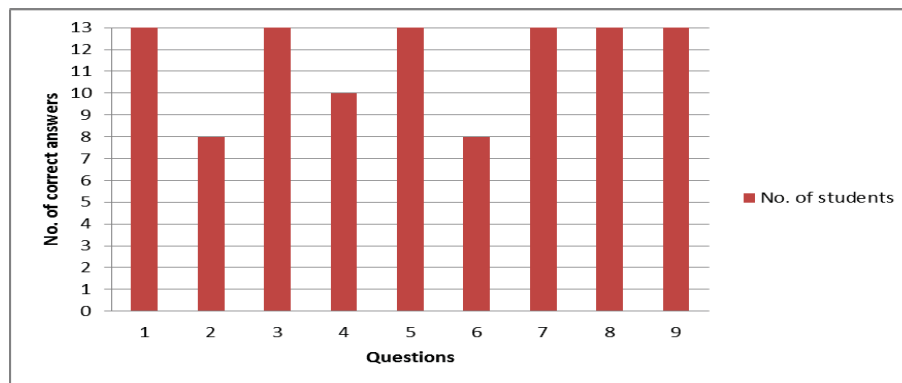
For this first task proposed in the questionnaire, we have obtained, from Group A, 89 correct answers out of 117 possible ones. For Group B, on the other hand, the number is 131 out of 216. These figures, which represent a 76% and a 60'5% of proper replies respectively, have been interpreted utilizing a *contrast of proportions* equation resolving that the percentage of correct answers for Group A is significantly higher than the one for Group B ( $p\text{-value} < 0,05$ ).

Graphs 2 and 3 portray the amount of correct responses for each of the questions that were proposed by both of the groups. At first sight, we can observe that the output of the students remains stable throughout the whole task but for a specific person in each class. If analyzing the questions, we can state that it is question no.6 – Q.*How much money do you have?* A.*Not much. I hardly have none/any* - the one which seems to be more problematic for our students, as well as no. 2 – Q. *Do you have any money?* A. *No, I don't have/have none* - for the specific case of Group B.

Graph 2. Correct answers in Group A for each of the questions in task no. 1



Graph 3. Correct answers in Group B for task no. 1



In task 2, four sentences are offered to the students to spot the mistake in each of them. The results of this first part of the exercise are shown in table 2, which shows the amount of correct answers obtained by Group A – 46 (88.46%) – and Group B – 77 (80.21%) – out of the total of 52 and 96 possible correct answers, respectively, being this difference not significant ( $p$ -value = 0.10).

Table 2. Collection of answers given to task 2 by Groups A and B

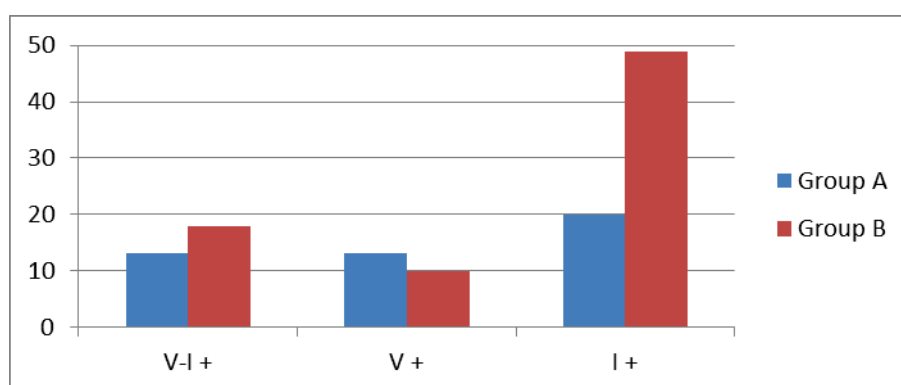
TASK 2	Group A	Group B
Correct	46 (88.46%)	77 (80.21%)
Incorrect	6 (11.54%)	19 (19.79%)

Once the first part of the task was done, the students were told to paraphrase the examples given so that they became correct according to their knowledge. Out of the students' performance when rephrasing, we have distinguished three different



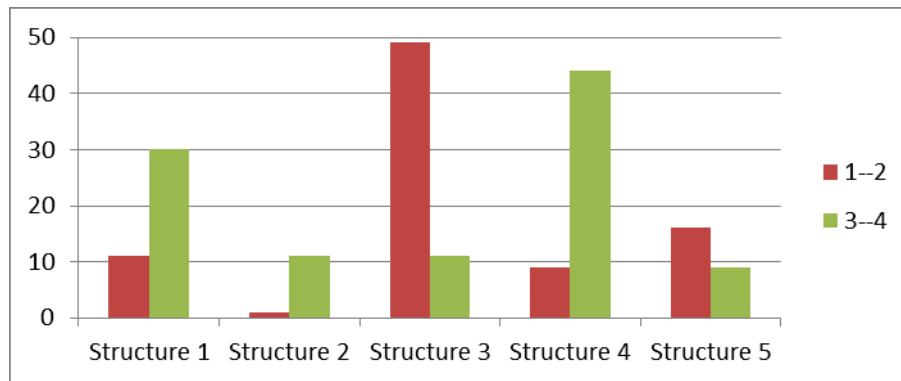
structures. Using the second entrance in the exercise – e.g. *I didn't get no apples* –, so as to illustrate this distinction, we have observed, as shown in graph 6, the following results: (1) the replacing of the whole double negative sentence – e.g. *I didn't get no apples* – by a positive one, e.g. *I got apples* [V(erb)-I(ndefinite) +]; (2) the transformation of the verb into its positive form keeping a negative indefinite, e.g. *I got no apples* [V(erb) +]; and, (3) the maintenance of the negative form of the verb and the change of the negative indefinite such as *no* into *any* a positive one [I(ndefinite) +] e.g. *I didn't get any apple*. Examining graph 4, we detect that it is this third structure the one which is mostly preferred ( $p$ -value < 0.'5 in favor of Group B). If we compare the other two structures, those in which the verb is turned into its positive form, the results obtained are approximately equivalent, this is,  $p$ -value = 0.43 in structure (1) and 0.04 in (2) both in favor of Group A.

Graph 4. Correct answers made by Groups A and B to task 2.

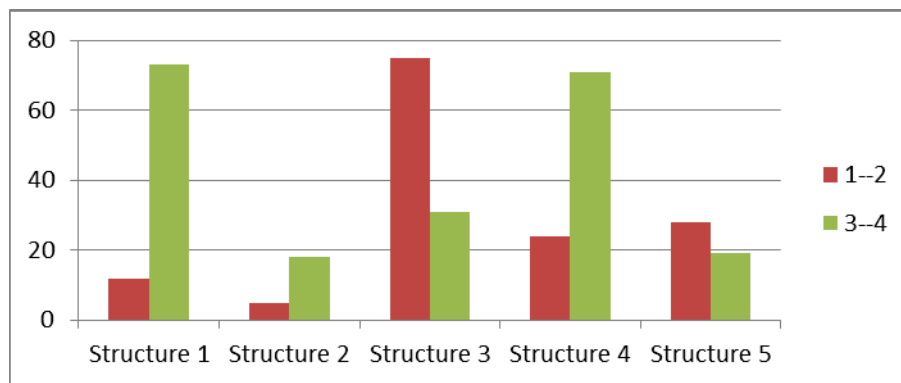


In task 3, there are neither correct nor incorrect answers. Students were expected to grade the sentences suggested as they regarded them as more or less acceptable. Considering this criterion, and as can be seen from graphs 5 and 6, we have grouped negative responses (1-2) on one column, the red one; and positives (3-4) on the green one. Besides, we have omitted invalid or null responses as we consider them unnecessary for our research and, also, because we do believe that some of the students understood these sentences in Spanish as mere examples and so they did not grade them.

Graph 5. Collection of answers given to task 3 by the students in Group A



Graph 6. Collection of answers given to task 3 by the students in Group B



It seems clear that it is structure number (3) - Negative form of the verb / negative indefinite in English – the one more rejected by students from both groups (81'66% in group A; 70'75% in group B) ( $p$ -values =0.06). This means that the vast majority of the students, it does not matter the teaching program in which they are enrolled, react in the same “negative” way when they are exposed to this structure in English. This is truly meaningful considering the fact that their reaction considerably varies when it comes to evaluating the same structure in Spanish, their native language because structures (1) - Negative form of the verb / negative indefinite in Spanish – is regarded as more correct by those same students (71'42% in group A; 85'88% in group B). This difference in favor of the traditional group results in  $p$ -value = 0,02.

If we compare structure (2) – negative form of the verb / positive indefinite in Spanish – and its equivalent structure (4) - Negative form of the verb / positive indefinite in English – we observe that 91.66% of Group A and 78.26% of Group B,  $p\text{-value} = 0,15$ , accept the former as correct while for the latter the numbers are 83,01% (Group A) and 74,73% (Group B) –  $p\text{-value} = 0,12$ .

A possible interpretation of these results will be further analyzed and commented all throughout the following pages.

## 7. DISCUSSION

In the previous section, we have offered an approximation to the results we have collected through the execution of this study. If we focus in deeper detail on the performance of the students who fulfilled the questionnaire, there is a series of results that merit to be remarked and so they will be commented in this section following the order in which they can be encountered in the mentioned questionnaire.

If we concentrate on task 1, we observe that the amount of students who answered properly each of the questions except for numbers 2 – e.g. *Q. Do you have any money? A. No I don't have/have* – and 6 – e.g. *Q. How much money do you have? A. Not much. I hardly have none/any*. There were two possibilities, i.e. pronouns and verbs, to be chosen among the options provided so, apparently, that seemed to be the factor that most likely could have been crucial when answering these questions. Notwithstanding, it has been the pronoun *none* the element that is shared by these two, apparently problematic, examples. This word, defined as “not one (of a group of people or things), or not any” (reference?), looks not to be clear for the students of any of the groups. It might be caused by the way pronouns and negatives are taught in schools: when these two grammatical elements are put together during an L2 English lesson, only the use of *some* and *any* is generally explained. A brief mention during these lessons could, in our opinion, prevent students misunderstanding the meaning and use of words such as *no one*, *nobody*, *neither*, or *none*, which are recurrently present in

English and which provoked errors in students' performance in this part of the questionnaire.

Moving now onto task 2, as expected, and linked with what has been just commented about negative pronouns, the most recurrent option students used to paraphrase was keeping the verb in its negative form and substituting the negative indefinite by "equivalents" with a positive implication, e.g. *some*, *somebody*, *somewhere*. This attitude might be due, again, to their ignorance on the way negative pronouns are used. It also appeared to be predictable, at least among those students of group B, the fact that a great number of students would automatically transform the coexistence of two negative elements into a positive sentence. It has been largely inculcated that *two negatives cancel out each other* and this idea, not always valid, is used by many of our students.

Being urged on to spot the mistakes, if there were, we expected, out of the interpretation proposed by the students for each of the sentences, to be able to find where they chiefly place the errors. Knowing this, it was easier for us to clarify in what way they are influenced by their native grammar. The outcome of task 2 was, by some means, different than that of the previous one. A better performance was again achieved by the members of Group A but the contrast of percentages obtained when analyzing the results of this task –  $p\text{-value} = 0'10$  – has been proved to state that there is not a significant difference between both groups, which is enough to validate our initial hypothesis, the effectiveness of a bilingual program over a traditional one.

Revising, finally, task 3, it has been proved that, although both structures (1) – negative form of the verb / negative indefinite in Spanish, e.g. *No necesitamos ninguna educación* – and (2) – negative form of the verb / positive indefinite in Spanish, e.g. *No necesitamos educación alguna* – are widely accepted in Spanish, the former is marginally better appreciated than the latter. This means that, admitting both cases are grammatically accepted in the native language of the students, a double negation is regarded as more correct than a simple one in which the negation falls only on the verb. If we aim our attention on the examples in English, there is no doubt that, as earlier introduced in this section and opposite to what happens in Spanish, our students do

perceive structure 3 – double negatives – as incorrect. Having put together utterances in both Spanish and English, we feel capable to analyze to which extent the students are influenced by the possibilities present in their native language and if more extensive input helps the learner to differentiate it from the one in the L2.

We have left structures 4 – negative form of the verb / positive indefinite in English, e.g. *I didn't know anything at all* – and 5 – positive form of the verb / negative indefinite in English, e.g. *I know nothing about sports* – for the final part of our discussion as they are the ones our students are more used to work with. They differ from each other on the position that the negative element occupies within the sentence, this is, the negation falls on the verb or on the indefinite element. Among these two, there is clear inclination in favor of the structure 4. It is this, again, the model recurrently taught, i.e. *negative form of the verb + positive indefinite*, the one which is largely preferred by both groups.

Having put together and analyzed the data extracted from task 3, we found out that we cannot establish that the response of one of the groups towards double negatives is significantly distinct from the other's.

In the light of the results achieved in our study, we can conclude that even though we expected that (1) as a consequence of a higher amount of input in English, the students enrolled in the English-Spanish bilingual program would prove to perform a better performance when dealing with negation structures; and (2) students in Group B, those in the traditional L2 learning program, would make a larger amount of mistakes in the same structures, notwithstanding, the outcome of this paper has not endorsed our research premises. The results obtained by the two groups have demonstrated that, despite the different instruction they receive, the output and knowledge of the students in Group A is not that excelling when compared with the one of Group B as we anticipated. Notwithstanding, inasmuch of the outcome of our study and considering the different reaction towards double negatives demonstrated by our students depending on the language being analyzed in each case, it seems that the data we have obtained point in the same direction as Butterworth's (1972, cited by Irvine, 2005), concluding that the mother tongue is not the most deciding factor for the final results when acquiring a second language.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

It is four years now when it was introduced in the Secondary School Jorge Manrique (Palencia, Spain) a bilingual learning program which has been coexisting with a traditional L2 learning one. Nevertheless, some of the regulations that frame the former program were signed almost ten years ago and so a new, brought-up-to-date analysis is, in our opinion, fundamental so as to evaluate if this method is still valid or if, on the other hand, any kind of revision might be necessary.

Given the results of our study, we consider crucially necessary the inclusion of some changes in the way English is being taught as a second language in Spain or, at least, in those centers which have introduced these new bilingual programs if they crave them to be truly effective. We propose two options of change. The first one, the one we acknowledge as easier to introduce, would imply a change in the syllabuses which are currently being used. We have observed while analyzing the answers that, for instance, numerous students do not recognize some pronouns which are repeatedly being used in English. Therefore, we would advocate for the reduction of theoretical instruction in favor of larger conversational task or work with audios and/or videos in which a more real English can be appreciated.

The second option of change is connected with audiovisual materials as well, which might seem in some way a bit more complicated to be put into practice as new technologies and resources would need to be introduced in the classroom. This option, which would improve a factor that has been analyzed as crucial in this paper for the acquisition of languages to be successful, is the so-called CALL<sup>11</sup> - Computer Assisted Language Learning – methodology, which was studied, among many others, by Torlakovic and Deugo (2004). They tested two groups of ESL learners, one of them exposed to teacher-fronted instruction and the other to CALL software, which fulfilled equal tasks. Results, as these scholars affirm in their research, showed a significant improvement on the intuition task and a significant confidence improvement on both

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<sup>11</sup> SLA learning procedure which is often identified as an approximation to language teaching and learning in which some kind of software is used so as to reinforce and ease the use and acknowledgement of the material which is going to be learned. It was defined by Levi (1997:1) as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning”.

intuition and production tasks for the computer group while the in-class group showed no significant gains.

Studies such as the one which has been just mentioned make us think that the acquisition/learning of a second language following a new, up-to-date technique like CALL would be much more effective. It seems clear that a SLA program structured around CALL would widely improve the acquisition of a language. In the particular case of double negatives, which constitute a phenomenon which is broadly changing nowadays, the individualized and immediate feedback given to the student would allow, for instance, a fast acknowledgement of the kind of English which is being used in this day and age preventing the content becoming old fashioned even before it gets to the student.

Notwithstanding, more realistic information could be obtained if a study like the one we have carried out was repeated later in the time in order to study the evolution of the students who have taken part on it and so proving a better understanding of simple and double negation in English. This developmental perspective would enrich the study of how efficiently our students learn a second language in different educational environments.

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## 10. APPENDIX

### APPENDIX 1. – QUESTIONNAIRE

IMMERSION - TRADITIONAL GROUP      STUDENT NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently taking, or have taken, any extra courses in English language? If yes, please, specify: .....

#### TASK 1, (MULTIPLE CHOICE)

**1.- Complete each of the answers choosing the option(s) that you find most accurate in each case:**

1. Q- Do you want anything?

A- No, I don't want \_\_\_\_\_.  
-anything      -nothing

2. Q-Do you have any money?

A- No, I \_\_\_\_\_ none.  
-don't have      -have

3. Q- Did you see those people?

A- No, I didn't see \_\_\_\_\_.  
-no one      -anyone

4. Q- Do you have any candy?

A- No, I don't have \_\_\_\_\_.  
-any      -none

5. Q- Didn't he tell you not to come here?

A- No, he didn't tell me \_\_\_\_\_.  
-nothing      -anything

6. Q- How much money do you have?

A- Not much. I hardly have \_\_\_\_\_.  
-none      -any

7. Q- Where are you going?

A- I \_\_\_\_\_ anywhere. I'm staying right here.  
-am going      -am not going

8. Q- So, you're staying right here?

A- That's right. I'm not going \_\_\_\_\_.  
-nowhere      -anywhere

9. Q- Did the prisoner say anything?

A- No, he \_\_\_\_\_ nothing.  
-said      -didn't say

## **TASK 2. (PRODUCTION)**

**2.- Rewrite only those sentences in which you find a mistake, leave a blank in the rest. Explain, briefly, the meaning of the sentences proposed:**

1- I didn't hardly notice you had had your hair cut.

---

2- I didn't get no apples.

---

3- She wouldn't get no credit for her answers.

---

4- I am surprised that you won't get no money.

---

## **TASK 3. (ACCEPTABILITY JUDGMENT)**

**3.- Grade 1-4 (1- very bad, 2- bad, 3- good, 4- very good) the next sentences as you find them more or less acceptable:**

### **1) Set 1**

- a) No necesitamos ninguna educación.
- b) No necesitamos educación alguna.
- c) We don't need no education.
- d) We need no education.
- e) We don't need any education.

### **2) Set 2**

- a) Yo no sabía nada en absoluto.
- b) I didn't know nothing at all.
- c) I didn't know anything at all.

### **3) Set 3**

- a) Mis amigos nunca hacen nada divertido.
- b) My friends never do nothing fun.
- c) My friends never do anything fun.

### **4) Set 4**

- a) Pedro no hablará con nadie sobre su película.
- b) Peter won't talk to nobody about his movie.
- c) Peter won't talk to no one about his movie.
- d) Peter won't talk to anybody about his movie.

### **5) Set 5**

- a) Yo no sé nada sobre deportes.
- b) I don't know nothing about sports.
- c) I don't know anything about sports.
- d) I know nothing about sports.